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60. (New) The method of Claim 55, wherein said alcohol-containing organic solvent comprises at least one solvent selected from the group consisting of dimethyl sulfoxide, dimethylformamide, dimethylacetamide, N-methylpyrrolidone, ethylenediamine, and diethylenetriamine.

DISCUSSION OF THE AMENDMENT

Claim 33 has been amended to contain the limitations of Claim 29, and by deleting superfluous language.

New Claims 55-60 have been added. Claim 55 corresponds to now-amended Claim 33, and also recites particular apparatus, as supported by Claims 39, 44 and 45, but omits the word "type", although no change in claim scope is intended by such omission.

No new matter has been added by the above amendment. Claims 29, 31-40, 43-45, 47-50, and 52-60 are now pending in the application.

REMARKS

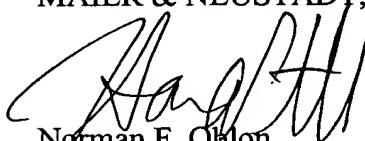
This divisional CPA has been filed to obtain examination of the Group II invention,
i.e., Claims 33-37 and 45, and new Claims 55-60, in response to the Restriction Requirement
made in the Office Action of February 4, 2002.

To the extent the Examiner maintains an election of species requirement, Claims 55-60 are directed to the elected species.

The application is ripe for examination on the merits. An early examination is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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IN THE CLAIMS

33. (Twice amended) A method of producing polyvinyl alcohol polymer comprising: saponification of a polyvinyl ester in an alcohol-containing organic solvent under the presence of a saponification catalyst, wherein saponification is carried out with a mole ratio of alcohol with respect to polyvinyl alcohol of 1.0 to 3.0, while distilling off the carboxylic ester produced by the saponification reaction, wherein said saponification comprises:

[a primary saponification reaction, in which saponification is carried out by mixing the polyvinyl ester in an alcohol containing organic solvent under the presence of a saponification catalyst, and

a subsequent secondary saponification reaction, in which saponification is carried out while distilling off the carboxylic ester that is produced, wherein said saponification reaction comprises:]

a first stage saponification process, comprised in turn of a primary saponification reaction, in which a saponification reaction is carried out by mixing the polyvinyl ester in the alcohol-containing organic solvent under the presence of a saponification catalyst and

a subsequent secondary saponification reaction, in which a saponification reaction is carried out while distilling off the carboxylic ester that is produced; and

a subsequent second stage saponification process, comprised in turn of a primary saponification reaction, in which a saponification reaction is carried out by mixing the polyvinyl ester in the alcohol-containing organic solvent under the presence of a saponification catalyst and

a subsequent secondary saponification reaction, in which a saponification reaction is carried out while distilling off the carboxylic ester that is produced.

Claims 55-60 (New)